

## D. ECONOMIC REDEVELOPMENT, JOBS, AND WORKER TRAINING

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OSWER has addressed a number of economic redevelopment action items through “brownfield” and job and worker training initiatives. These are an integral part of environmental justice because there is a concern that communities with minority populations and low-income populations not only bear a disproportionate share of human health and environmental risks but also bear a disproportionate share of economic distress. This may occur because these populations are often concentrated in older urban or rural areas where pollution remains after the industries that caused the pollution have left the area.

#### EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Action Agenda

Redevelopment at abandoned or underused industrial and commercial properties - or “brownfields” sites -- is frequently complicated by potential environmental contamination. On January 25, 1995, EPA Administrator Carol Browner announced the Brownfields Action Agenda to help facilitate the cleanup of contaminated properties and address the twin goals of economic development and environmental justice, especially in our urban centers.

#### Brownfields Pilots

As one aspect of the Brownfields Action Agenda, the Agency is funding 50 Brownfields Pilots across the country during 1995 and 1996 with up to \$200,000 in seed money. States, political subdivisions thereof, and Indian Tribes (limitations imposed by statute through which the grants are authorized) will use these awards for site assessments; to direct special efforts toward removing regulatory barriers without sacrificing protectiveness; and to bring community groups, investors, lenders, developers and other affected parties together to cleanup and redevelop brownfields. The pilots will help build an enduring capacity at the state and local levels for encouraging cleanups and redevelopment.

#### NEJAC Public Dialogues on Brownfields

EPA has begun working closely the NEJAC on the Brownfields issue. In January 1995, the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) solicited comments from the NEJAC Waste and Facility Siting Subcommittee on the Brownfields Action Agenda. In turn, the Subcommittee requested that OSWER co-sponsor public dialogues on “Urban Revitalization and Brownfields: Envisioning Healthy and Sustainable Communities” which will take place during 1995 in Boston, MA (June 5), Philadelphia, PA (June 7), Detroit, MI (June 9), San Francisco, CA (July 18), and Atlanta, GA (July 20). Through these dialogues the NEJAC will solicit input from the environmental justice community. EPA has committed that the dialogues will have a demonstrable role in shaping the Brownfields Action Agenda.

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As the Brownfields Action Agenda moves forward, EPA expects to continually work with the representatives of communities and environmental justice organizations on the national and local level. OSWER will also work in coordination with other Federal agencies, including the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the pre-established HUD and USDA Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities (EZ/ECs).

### **Jobs and Worker Training**

OSWER views the matter of employment and training as critical to the effective implementation of the environmental justice action agenda. OSWER recognizes that an effective jobs program must involve all segments of the community including residents, community organizations, owners, contractors, labor organizations, schools, community colleges and other training organizations.

OSWER has initiated a number of activities to assure that residents of communities have the opportunity to fully participate in these environmental restoration and economic development programs including assistance to local contractors and offering and employment programs for members of affected communities.

OSWER has targeted the Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) in Cleveland as a pilot for development of a curriculum to train students on environmental issues and prepare them for employment in hazardous materials cleanup activities. Tri-C is not only developing a two-year degree program to train local citizens for jobs in the environmental field, but is also designing training activities to encourage public school children to develop an interest in environmental careers. The Hazardous Materials and Research Institute (HMTRI), a consortium of community colleges, will increase the number of community colleges offering environmental work force training programs. This consortium will conduct national workshops for community colleges which are located in communities near 50 brownfield pilot sites. These colleges must also demonstrate a commitment to developing community outreach and environmental justice action items. The Rio Hondo Community College jobs-training pilot will build a partnership with a large state-of-the-art landfill. The pilot will provide job training opportunities in landfill management and a wide range of solid waste management technologies. Rio Hondo is predominantly a minority and low-income community. Special emphasis will be given to recruiting community members into the jobs-training pilot. OSWER is exploring additional options to expand these training efforts (e.g., working with labor unions and DOL, DOEd, HUD, and HHS.)

OSWER is working with NIEHS on pilots for training of hazardous waste workers to improve communications between workers and communities and to enhance safety and protection. In 1994, Congress appropriated \$3 million for a minority worker training program. This program will test a range of strategies for the recruitment and training of young persons, who live near hazardous waste sites for work in the environmental field. The

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program was prescribed to include pre-employment training, including literacy and life skills, as well as environmental worker training, including hazardous waste, asbestos, lead abatement and health and safety training. This program is designed to lead to entry into apprenticeship programs and actual employment in environmental remediation work.

OSWER has initiated a dialogue with the contractor and labor communities to stress the importance of environmental justice concerns. OSWER is also working with State, Tribal and local governments to promote employment opportunities in communities. A fuller description of these efforts is contained in the Contracts and Grants section of this report. There are additional action items in this report that deal with economic redevelopment, jobs, and training. Other sections include Outreach, Communication and Partnerships, Contracts and Grants, and Federal Intergovernmental Cooperation.